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## New program supports cognitive-impaired students

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Oakland University is teaming with the Oakland Intermediate School District and Rochester Community Schools on a groundbreaking venture to help Oakland County students with cognitive impairments experience college first-hand.

The new program, called Oakland University Transition, places students in an age-appropriate setting and provides opportunities for making the transition into adult life. Students take part in social and recreational activities on Oakland's campus, such as auditing OU classes and engaging in volunteer job training exercises at places like Lowry Early Childhood Education Center and student radio station WXOU. Despite their cognitive impairments, each student has shown a particular interest in and knowledge of a variety of disciplines.

Currently, three students are in the program. The plan is to include 15 students over the next three years.

"The Transition program gives the students the opportunity to interact with age-appropriate peers," said Suzanne James, OU Transition facilitator from Rochester Community Schools. "They experience 'college life' at their own level. All other post high school special education programs are housed in segregated facilities. Transition students are able to become life-long learners, develop friendships with non-disabled peers, and learn a variety of job skills and how to become advocates for themselves in the real world."

Opportunities to support the program are available in many forms. On-campus employers may provide work experiences; faculty may allow classroom access to participants; and OU students may perform volunteer work for the program, support program participants in class, or simply be a friend.

"OU students, faculty and staff can support the program by meeting a program participant for coffee or lunch, meet for a basketball game or concert, play pool in the Bumpers Games Room, or in many other ways," James said. "Students can assist a Transition participant with class assignments or projects, and staff can assist at the volunteer job site."

For more information on the program or to provide volunteer support, contact Suzanne James at (248) 941-1188 or [sjames@rochester.k12.mi.us](mailto:sjames@rochester.k12.mi.us).

### SUMMARY

Oakland University is teaming with the Oakland Intermediate School District and Rochester Community Schools on a groundbreaking venture to help Oakland County students with cognitive impairments experience college first-hand. The new program, called Oakland University Transition, places students in an age-appropriate setting and provides opportunities for making the transition into adult life.

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